



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

March 2, 2004

Rick Raymond
Environmental Analyst
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
4111 Aviation Drive
P.O. Box 196900
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6900

Re: Bridge Repair

Dear Mr. Raymond:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment prepared by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) for repair and maintenance of four bridges in the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The purpose of the project is to place riprap in specific eroded embankments next to the Deception Creek bridge, on three bridge embankments at Campbell Creek and Minnesota Drive and on an embankment between two of the bridges. Some proposed work will be conducted below ordinary high water (OHW) in both Deception and Campbell Creeks.

ADOT&PF has determined that the project may cause temporary adverse effects on EFH in Campbell Creek and Deception Creek, and further offers that "this effect is expected to be minor as a result of the incorporation of the proposed conservation measures into the proposed project." NMFS agrees with this determination. However, the impacts could be further reduced by adopting the following EFH Conservation Recommendations.

EFH Conservation Recommendations

NMFS proposes these EFH Conservation Recommendations pursuant to Section 305(b)(4)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to further reduce adverse effects:

- Fix the drainage problems that are causing erosion at bridges 1443 and 1444. The erosion is being caused by drainage from the road and/or bridge. Dumping riprap in the eroded area and cleaning the scuppers may not solve the problem. Geotextile fabric or other measures may be needed to hold the soil in place under and around the riprap.
- Use vegetation to stabilize slopes where feasible, such as the areas on the ends of the riprap zones and the proposed riprap area between bridges 1443 and 1444. These areas appear to get enough sunlight for vegetative growth. Willows could be planted in these

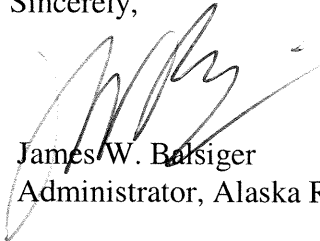


areas to provide additional soil support as well as improved habitat. A combination of riprap and vegetation would stabilize the banks as well as provide more habitat value than riprap only.

- The erosion problem at the Deception Creek bridge appears to be caused by the public using all terrain vehicles to cross the creek. Concrete barricades or permanent posts and guardrails may be necessary to deter traffic in this location. If this location is successfully blocked, these users may develop a new crossing somewhere else, which could result in additional habitat degradation. NMFS recommends a more thorough analysis of options to address the erosion problem at this location.
- No timing window for these activities is proposed in the EFH Assessment. NMFS understands that ADOT&PF would like to perform these activities as soon as possible. Although a fall timing window would be the best to minimize overall project impact, we understand based on discussions with your office that fall construction may not be feasible in this instance. Therefore, NMFS recommends a timing window of May 15 to July 15 for construction at these locations.

Please contact Larry Peltz (271-1332) if you have any questions or concerns about this project.

Sincerely,



James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

cc: Phil Brna - USFWS - Anchorage
Stewart Seaberg - ADNR - Anchorage
Jeff Davis - ADNR - Palmer